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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

Draft resolution by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Abdul Mejid Hussein (Ethiopia), on the basis of informal consultations

Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/201 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 56/201 of 21 December 2001 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and Council resolution 2002/29 of 25 July 2002,

Reiterating that the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities of the United Nations system should be, inter alia, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism as well as their ability to respond to development needs in a flexible manner, and that the operational activities of the United Nations system are carried out for the benefit of recipient countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development,

Reaffirming and underscoring the collective commitment and political will of member States to strengthening the role and capacity of the United Nations development system to assist developing countries in the implementation of the goals, targets and commitments set in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and by the major United Nations conferences and summits,

Stressing that national Governments have the primary responsibility for their countries' development, and recognizing the importance of national ownership of development programmes,

Reiterating the need for all organizations of the United Nations development system, in accordance with their respective mandates, to focus their efforts at the field level in accordance with the priorities identified by recipient countries and the goals, targets and commitments set in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and by the major United Nations conferences and summits,

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/201,[1] on assessment of the lessons learned by United Nations organizations from evaluation activities at the field level[2] and on funding of development cooperation activities of the United Nations system;[3]

2. *Takes note also* of the request contained in resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003 to invite the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, in his capacity as chair of the United Nations Development Group, to present, on a regular basis, to the Economic and Social Council at its coordination segment, the activities carried out by the United Nations Development Group related to the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits;

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[1] E/2003/61.

[2] E/2003/64.

[3] E/2003/89.

3. *Takes note further* of the progress made in the reform of the United Nations development system and calls for its continuation;

4. *Takes note* of the fact that most organizations of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, are currently realigning their policies, strategies, programmes and activities on the basis of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, including through mechanisms such as multi-year strategic frameworks, where they exist, the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as well as in the context of their contribution to national poverty reduction strategies, including poverty reduction strategy papers where they exist;

Funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

5. *Reiterates* that regular/core resources, inter alia, because of their untied nature, are the bedrock of the operational activities of the United Nations and essential for the maintenance of the multilateral, neutral and universal nature of the United Nations development system;

6. *Notes with regret* that, although significant progress has been achieved with regard to the governance and functioning of the United Nations development system, there has not been, as part of that overall process of change, a significant increase in core resources for operational activities for development;

7. *Recognizes* that strengthening the role and capacity of the United Nations development system to assist countries in achieving their development goals requires continuing improvement in its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact, along with a significant increase in and expansion of its resource base on a continued, more predictable and assured basis;

8. *Invites* all United Nations funds and programmes, as well as the specialized agencies, to further explore possibilities to strengthen their resource base, including, as appropriate, through multi-year funding frameworks as resource management tools integrating programme objectives, results and resources;

9. *Calls upon* all donor countries and countries in a position to do so to substantially increase their contributions to the core/regular budgets of the United Nations development system, in particular the funds and programmes, and wherever possible, to contribute on a multi-year basis, and also stresses the need for further exploration of other sources of funding that could complement but should not replace traditional sources;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to undertake further analytical work on the issue of funding, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review;

Capacity-building

11. *Reaffirms* the need for all organizations of the United Nations development system at country level to focus on capacity-building as one of their primary objectives, within their respective mandates, and urges these organizations to: (a) support recipient Governments and other relevant stakeholders in devising country-level strategies for capacity-building in the pursuit of internationally agreed development goals; (b) intensify inter-agency information sharing at the system-wide level on good practices and experience gained, results achieved, benchmarks and indicators, monitoring and evaluation criteria concerning capacity-building, and reflect them in the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and (c) invite all organizations to include reporting on capacity-building in their annual reports to their respective governing bodies;

12. *Reiterates* that the United Nations development system should use, to the fullest extent possible and practical, national execution and available national expertise and technologies as the norm in the implementation of the operational activities;

Common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

13. *Requests* the United Nations development system and its country-level structures to continue their efforts to enhance the quality of the common country assessment, in particular its analytical aspects, and to strengthen the operational impact of the United Nations

Development Assistance Framework, including through inviting the active engagement of the specialized agencies and other partners, as appropriate, in the formulation and the use of these instruments, under the leadership of national Governments;

14. *Welcomes* efforts by the members of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group to explicitly link their programme support to national development goals and priorities, through the revised United Nations Development Assistance Framework and its results matrix, invites other United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies to use the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results matrix, and requests that the matrix be submitted to the Executive Boards as an annex to the country programme;

15. *Requests* United Nations funds, programmes and the specialized agencies to continue to ensure the alignment and integration of their operational activities for development with national development efforts and priorities, through the active and full government participation and leadership at all stages of the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes, as well as broader involvement of all relevant stakeholders;

16. *Notes* the increased collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, and invites the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to explore further ways to enhance cooperation, collaboration and coordination, including through greater harmonization of strategic frameworks, instruments, modalities and partnership arrangements, in full accordance with the priorities of the recipient Governments, and in this regard emphasizes the importance of ensuring, under the leadership of national authorities, greater consistency between the strategic frameworks developed by the United Nations funds, programmes, agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, and the national poverty reduction strategies, including the poverty reduction strategy papers where they exist;

17. *Notes also* the efforts of the United Nations Development Group to promote the role of the regional bureaux of the funds and programmes in assisting country teams in the preparation of the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

18. *Encourages* the regional commissions to provide, when requested, their inputs for the preparation of those frameworks;

Evaluation of operational activities for development

19. *Emphasizes* the importance of monitoring and evaluation of operational activities of the United Nations system in order to enhance their effectiveness and impact, and calls upon the Secretary-General to integrate a stronger focus on lessons learned, results and outcomes in future reports;

20. *Stresses* the need to ensure the full participation of national authorities as well as the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the design, programming, implementation and evaluation processes, as well as in the drafting of the terms of reference, the development of methodologies and indicators and the selection of teams in all evaluation exercises conducted at the field level;

21. *Recommends* that the United Nations funds, programmes and the specialized agencies make systematic efforts to enhance the capacity for identifying, documenting and synthesizing lessons learned from evaluation activities in order to retain and absorb their results, ensure their dissemination, in particular at the country level, by placing the evaluation reports in the public domain using the Internet, and use evaluations findings and lessons learned in the design and implementation of programmes and projects, and also recommends that they assist national efforts to create country-level repositories of evaluation findings and lessons learned that are relevant in each national context, supporting the use of information and communications technology, national databases of lessons learned from evaluation, the development of analysis, documentation, distillation and synthesis of those lessons learned and promoting the development of publications and the use of other means of communication;

22. *Calls upon* all organizations of the United Nations system to make additional efforts to promote the development of national evaluation capacities, including capacities to make use of lessons learned from past United Nations activities that are relevant in each national context, and encourages them to communicate findings of evaluation activities and disseminate corresponding lessons learned to national entities, also, as appropriate through a more frequent use of local national languages;

23. *Recommends* that all organizations of the United Nations development system consider lessons learned and their dissemination as a specific required component of their activities and designate those responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the lessons learned process both at Headquarters and at the country level;

24. *Requests* the organizations of the United Nations development system to encourage country teams to make greater use of lessons learned from evaluations in the preparation of the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, individual country programmes and other relevant country documents and to encourage enhanced country-level absorption of lessons learned, including through the intensification of activities such as joint evaluations, as appropriate under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework umbrella, of programmes and joint support to national databases of lessons learned from evaluation;

Simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures on operational activities

25. *Welcomes* progress made by the members of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group in the harmonization and simplification of rules and procedures, and requests the United Nations funds and programmes to enhance and accelerate their simplification and harmonization efforts to ensure full implementation of the programme of work submitted in 2002 before the end of 2004;

26. *Requests* that efforts be undertaken across the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, to make progress in all the areas of simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures at the field level, taking into account efforts and ongoing initiatives by bilateral donors and multilateral development banks, with the ultimate intent of reducing

transaction costs, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency in aid delivery and enhancing government ownership of development processes through better coordination and management of external assistance;

27. *Requests* the funds and programmes of the United Nations system, through their Executive Boards, to include in their programmes of work the harmonization and simplification of recovery policies for non-core resources contributions;

28. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in due consultation with the funds and programmes, through the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group, to submit to the next substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2004, a report on the assessment of the value added of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards and their impact on the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council and to make recommendations as appropriate;

Common premises and shared services

29. *Encourages* the members of the United Nations Development Group to continue their efforts in the area of common premises, shared services and joint offices, with the objective of ensuring higher quality and cost effectiveness of country-level functioning of the United Nations system;

Resident coordinator system

30. *Reiterates* the need for greater participation by the specialized and technical agencies in the functioning of the resident coordinator system, encouraging all the organizations of the United Nations system to set in place innovative and collaborative ways to enable the resident coordinator system to tap, to an even greater degree, into the wealth of expertise in those areas that are relevant to support national efforts towards internationally agreed development goals;

31. *Also reiterates* the need to increase the number of women resident coordinators;

32. *Encourages* the resident coordinators to continue to work closely with the country representatives of individual agencies, including the World Bank and other relevant partners, in order to ensure effective coordination and collaboration under the leadership of national authorities, including in post-conflict situations;

33. *Requests* the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs to continue their efforts to provide a coordinated response to the needs of countries in transition from relief to development;

34. *Encourages* the resident coordinator system to facilitate the formulation and use of integrated and flexible approaches in complex emergency and post-conflict situations, ensuring that all relevant partners, including those outside the United Nations system, are involved under the leadership and with the fullest involvement of the Government, wherever possible;

Gender mainstreaming in operational activities

35. *Calls* on the organizations of the United Nations system to improve their gender mainstreaming efforts in operational activities of the United Nations system in all fields, including in support of poverty eradication, reiterating that the empowerment of women is a development priority, and to strengthen their efforts in support of the development of national capacities to improve the status of women in the context of development and poverty eradication policies;

South-South cooperation/economic and technical cooperation among developing countries

36. *Requests* the organizations of the United Nations system to take appropriate measures to improve the effective incorporation of technical cooperation among developing countries into their programmes and projects and to intensify efforts towards mainstreaming the modality of technical cooperation among developing countries, including through support for the activities of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and encourages other relevant international institutions to take similar measures;

Guidelines for the next triennial comprehensive policy review

37. *Requests* the Secretary-General to focus the analysis for the triennial comprehensive policy review in 2004, in the context of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, on:

(*a*) Assessment of the assistance that the United Nations development system provides to developing countries in order to support their efforts to pursue poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development;

(*b*) Integration of operational activities for development of the United Nations system with national efforts and priorities;

(*c*) Identification of measures for further improvement in coherence and efficiency of the United Nations system at the country level;

(*d*) Harmonization and simplification processes, further identifying possible areas for an agenda for 2004-2007;

(*e*) Identification of ways to enhance capacity-building in order to assist developing countries to pursue poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development;

(*f*) Adequacy of the United Nations development funding, in the light of the challenges that internationally agreed development goals present to the developing countries and the international community, and to make recommendations accordingly, and the identification of ways to ensure adequate funding for operational activities in this context;

(*g*) Adequacy of human resources and necessary skills available at the country level within the United Nations system to support national efforts and priorities;

(*h*) Effectiveness of the reforms of the operational activities of the United Nations in improving development results and outcomes and increasing the coherence, efficiency and quality of programming at the country level, ensuring in this regard that particular attention is paid to the contribution of the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the associated results matrix in improving operational effectiveness;

(*i*) Contribution of the Millennium Development Goals[4] as a framework to support the alignment of the operational activities of the United Nations system with national development efforts and priorities;

(*j*) Results identified, outcomes and lessons learned at the country level from evaluation activities.

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[4] Internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.